

Necessity for a Revolution in Teaching Communicative English Grammar to Bangladeshi Learners in CLT Classroom

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Abstract

Grammar is the basic of a language. Without learning grammar language learning is incomplete. Now a day, communicative English has diminished the importance of teaching grammar. As a result, proper English learning is being hampered in many levels. Learners are using English without learning it. Communicative English has strengthened the speaking skills of the learners. But without proper use of Grammar non-native learners are not being able to write in English as much as they speak. Of course, linguistic competence and communicative competence is not the same thing but without one the other is vague. The misconception about the implementation of the modern method Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is that it does not incorporate Grammar. From this misconception Grammar is being ignored and it has become important to bring about a change in the selection and grading procedures of communicative grammar teaching materials. This paper deals with the importance of explicit and implicit grammar, suggestion about the implementation of strong and weak version of CLT, needs analysis, selection and grading procedures to choose appropriate materials for teaching communicative English grammar in different levels of CLT classroom in Bangladesh.

Keywords: CLT, Communicative Grammar, Conflict, Needs Analysis, Materials.

1. Introduction

The Grammar Translation Method has been replaced by the modern method CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). Grammar Translation Method is concerned with teacher-centered classroom, teaching grammar rules and their application through exercise. The main objective of GT method is linguistic competence. On the other hand, CLT is concerned with meaningful interaction in the target language, authentic materials, native like fluency and pronunciation. The main objective of CLT is communicative competence by linking classroom language learning with language outside the classroom. It has always been a debatable topic whether grammar teaching is necessary or not in communicative approach. It is evident that without acknowledgement of the rules of grammar one can not learn and use language properly. The question is how to teach grammar in this communicative approach? The ancient GT method has been rejected and has become backdated. For this reason, a revolutionary change in choosing materials of Communicative English grammar for non-native learners in CLT Classroom has become essential. But bringing about a change out of this revolution is a very difficult task in this communicative approach. To be successful in choosing proper materials for teaching grammar in this communicative approach the main concern would be proper integration of grammar with language use, needs analysis, incorporation of the four basic skills, and the inclusion of function, meaning and communication in the study of grammar.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Using Communicative Grammar in CLT

There are many misconceptions about the implementation of CLT. One is that it does not incorporate grammar. The question is does CLT teach grammar? If it teaches grammar, then how? In fact, CLT is not the presentation and

development of linguistic structures as the only means of communicative ability.

According to Salimbene (1986), “Grammatical form is taught not as an end itself, but as a means of carrying out communicative intent.” (p. 50).

CLT is more than sentence-level grammatical competence. The transformation of a semantic code into a phonological code through the accomplishment of a syntactic code is the language. That means in communication the oral expression (phonological code) of thought (semantic code) is more important than correct expression or accuracy (syntactic code). Syntactic code edits or corrects the language. For example: A non-native speaker may say mistakenly, The boys has done the work. This sentence is grammatically incorrect. But native speaker can clearly understand the meaning. The form is wrong but meaning is clear. Grammar is not playing a vital role for communication.

Krashen’s (1982) Monitor Hypothesis shows that explicit grammar forms only serve as a tool for monitoring or editing learners’ language. That means learners learn the rules of grammar only to monitor the correctness of the language use in addition to what has been acquired. (p. 15).

But to speak accurately grammar is important because the expression is not proper though the meaning is understandable. In case of formal communication accuracy is very important. It is inadequate to acquire a L2, if meaning is the only focus.

Besides, different countries have different pronunciations. There are different dialects, sociolects, idiolects, diglossia, registers of English language. In the communicative approach grammar should not be a mere set of rules for language that helps little in communication. Rather it should lead to better language use in context.

Spada (2007) in response to the belief that Communicative Language Teaching does not incorporate any grammar argues that the thought that “Communicative Language Teaching means an exclusive focus on meaning” is a myth or a misconception (p. 275).

CLT syllabuses are organized with functions connected with their correspondent grammatical points.

Thornbury (1999) talks about two main types of approaches to CLT: the shallow-end approach and the deep-end approach to CLT. The shallow-end approach to Communicative Language Teaching is concerned with learning grammar rules to use them in communicative situations whereas the deep-end approach to CLT is based on the belief that grammar is acquired unconsciously during the performance on those communicative situations, so it would be useless to teach grammar previously and explicitly (pp. 18-19).

Shallow-end approach to CLT does not mean it is not communicative. Rather in shallow-end approach to CLT Grammar is considered as a means towards communication. So, a proper reply to the misconception that CLT does not incorporate grammar would be CLT dresses grammar with communicative functions and this is the right approach and role of grammar in CLT which can be considered to be communicative grammar.

2.2 The Conflict between Explicit Grammar and Implicit Grammar and the Choice between Strong and Weak Versions in CLT

In the communicative approach grammar teaching is the most difficult thing but an essential one. The conflict between the explicit grammar and implicit grammar is always there. This needs to be solved as CLT is being used rapidly all over the world. Explicit grammar instruction supplies the declarative knowledge of grammar whereas implicit grammar instruction supplies procedural knowledge of grammar. Explicit grammar instruction creates awareness and leads to conscious learning and noticing (Schmidt’s noticing hypothesis, 1990). Explicit grammar is concerned with learning grammar through presentation of the set of rules and their practice whereas implicit grammar is concerned with using language examples to induce rules.

A.P.R. Howatt (1984) talks about strong and weak versions of CLT and differentiates between a “strong” and a “weak” version of CLT stating that a strong version is the development of a language through communication which doesn’t mean reactivating existing knowledge of the language but rather prompting the development of the language system itself. However, the “weak” version focuses on providing the learner with sufficient opportunities to speak the language and to put that in the centre of language teaching (p.279). Strong version of CLT is concerned with using language to learn it and the weak version of CLT is concerned with learning language to use it. According to Nunan (2007) the strong version of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) does not deal with grammar teaching at all, the weak or focused-on-form version does include explicit grammar teaching (p. 93).

In case of non-native learners of English, it would be unwise to use language to learn it and hence the strong version is not appropriate for them. On the other hand it would be wise to learn language to use it. As Nunan (2007) believes that focus on form would be complemented with enabling tasks, such as communicative activities, which make learners manipulate the linguistic forms in a communicative way, like in a 'find someone who...' activity, and which do not stop the communicative mood of the lesson (p. 24).

3. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are

- To show the importance of teaching English grammar to Bangladeshi learners in CLT classroom.
- To investigate the suitability of current approach of grammar teaching in CLT classroom of Bangladesh.
- To justify the necessity for a revolution in teaching communicative English grammar.
- To give practical suggestions about the techniques of communicative grammar teaching.

4. Methodology of the Research

Primary data has been used for this research paper and data has been collected from the interview with a total number of 10 English teachers and faculty members from a total number of 6 different schools, colleges and universities of Bangladesh. For this research information has also been collected from various publications, books, journals and research papers.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

Primary data has been collected from the interview with 10 teachers from 6 different institutions of Bangladesh shown in (Appendix A). The questionnaire used for the interviews are shown in (Appendix B). Some teachers were interviewed face to face with pen and paper and some were interviewed through mobile phone. The 'Yes' responses or tick marks of each query were used to create the frequency and percentage table-1.

The frequency and percentage of each variable is shown in table-1 below:

Table-1: Frequency and Percentage of Each Variable

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Grammar is taught deductively.	7	23.33
Grammar is taught inductively.	3	10.00
Well-trained in communicative grammar teaching.	2	6.67
Students love to learn grammar rules	7	23.33
Grammar rules are presented through communicative functions.	3	10.00
Students find it difficult to induce grammar rules from the communicative functions.	8	26.67
Total=	30	100.00

The table -1 shows that 23.33% English teachers and faculty members are teaching grammar deductively in CLT classroom. 10% English teachers and faculty members are teaching grammar inductively. 6.67% English teachers and faculty members say that they are well-trained in teaching communicative grammar. 23.33% English teachers and faculty members think that students love to learn grammar rules. 10% English teachers and faculty members say that they present grammar rules through communicative functions. Highest 26.67% English teachers and faculty members say that students find it difficult to induce grammar rules from the communicative functions.

Analyzing the data some major problems in teaching communicative grammar to Bangladeshi learners in CLT

classroom are given below:

- Most teachers are still teaching grammar deductively in CLT classrooms of Bangladesh.
- Teachers are not properly trained in teaching communicative grammar.
- Very few teachers are presenting grammar rules through communicative functions.
- Students find it difficult to induce grammar rules from the communicative functions.

So, it is clear that communicative grammar is not properly dealt with in the CLT classrooms of Bangladesh. As a result, it has become necessary to bring about a revolutionary change in teaching communicative English grammar in CLT classrooms of Bangladesh.

5.1 Needs Analysis

In communicative approach grammar, of course, has its role to play but it is not the traditional role rather a revolutionary role. So, proper needs analysis can help to choose proper grammar teaching materials for CLT classrooms.

Ellis (2006) mentions, “Grammar has held and continues to hold a central place in language teaching. The zero grammar approach was flirted with but never really took hold, as is evident in both the current textbook materials emanating from publishing houses and in current theories of L2 acquisition. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that teaching grammar works.” (p. 102)

Grammar teaching materials have to be authentic in the communicative approach. That means they need to serve for communicative functions. In CLT learners need grammar to communicate. Grammar teaching is necessary for students, and CLT should include both speaking and writing. Grammar should have a communicative approach in the classroom, to focus on speaking and listening, on comprehension and communication. Teachers need to work with structured input which is basically to provide the learners input as meaningful as possible so that they can like working with the language and they can like taking it and acquiring it, instead of learning it.

There are two effective ways to teach grammar, one is to provide students with explicit explanations, examples and activities related to the grammar points and the other is a communicative way of teaching, such as introducing grammar points through examples and activities as well as using structured input. Whatever the case is teachers should keep it mind that learners are not supposed to induce wrong rules from the language examples. A combination of everything focusing on the different aspects like speaking, listening, writing, communicative tasks, a little bit mechanical stuff like grammar would fulfill the demands of the Bangladeshi learners in CLT classroom.

In TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) there should be repetition of grammar items more than once. Teaching grammar should enable language learners to use linguistic forms successfully in communication. Chomsky’s generativist views (Chomsky, 1965, as quoted in Westera, 2001:78), “the knowledge and rules that are necessary to produce speech” whereas performance is “the way speech functions when contaminated with external factors”. Teachers need to believe that grammar is competence and communication is performance. Both are compatible.

Grammar teaching materials of a CLT classroom for Bangladeshi English language learners should be three types: text based, task-based and realia.

Some students respond well to explicit structures and some may find it boring and they prefer communicative tasks. So, according to the learning style and preference of the learners teacher may use a spiral curriculum to create a balance between pre-communicative and communicative tasks.

5.2 Selection and Grading Procedures to Choose Appropriate Materials for Teaching Communicative English grammar in Different Levels of CLT Classroom

All communicative approaches have a role for grammar teaching. Grammar needs to be taught within any communicative approach without interrupting the communicative functions. As Harmer (1997) mentions that it is enough to say that grammar teaching – of both the overt and covert kind- has a real and important place in the classroom (p.7).

Grammar can surely help to strengthen the communicative approaches. Students need to know grammar as well as perform communicative activities. Communicative Grammar is an effective tool to teach a second language in the classrooms of non-native learners.

Teachers and curriculum developers need to change the application of grammar to facilitate communication. Almazra (1996) mentions that “pre-service teacher education courses should help student teachers to be in more control of their professional development and provide them with the opportunity to approach the profession from a much broader perspective than as merely a method. Student teachers should be taught the skills and confidence to analyze and articulate their thinking” (p.75).

Geddes and White talks about Unmodified Authentic Language which is "Language that occurs originally as a genuine act of communication". This material is gathered from authentic communicative contexts and Simulated Authentic Language which is "Language produced for pedagogical purposes, but which exhibits features that have a high probability of occurrence in genuine acts of communication" (as cited in Omaggio, 1986:128-129). Adapted, modified and creative texts are included in this category. The first material is suitable for native speakers in their own culture and the second is suitable for non-native language learners.

6. Recommendations

According to the needs analysis some practical suggestions for selecting and grading appropriate materials for teaching communicative English grammar in different levels of CLT classroom are as follows:

- The form and function have to be combined in such a way that there should be revision and recycling of both. There can be free elements in which teachers can include whatever they wish. They can explain and simplify the language elements.
- Most grammar books are concerned with pre-communicative tasks. So, in this communicative approach teachers need to spend more time in communicative tasks rather than pre-communicative tasks. Pre-communicative activities are useless without actual communication.
- CLT is a learner-centered approach. So, teachers need to engage the students more and more to participate in communication. Teacher should play the role of a facilitator and must make sure that grammar teaching would not hamper spontaneous communication and learners also should not induce wrong rules from the use of language.
- Function, meaning and communication should be included in the study of grammar.
- Grammar structures should be presented through communicative functions. The use of specific grammar rules can be presented innovatively by the teacher. Teachers can use dialogues, realia, audio-visual materials to enhance their attention.
- As CLT deals with the four skills of language: reading, writing, speaking and listening, there should be enough scope for learners to use their grammatical knowledge to perform well in these four macro skills of language.

- Some students respond well to the rules and structures. For them it is easy to learn language. But in communicative approach instead of serving explicit grammar rules they need to be treated carefully by the presentation of more and more functions of the language that incorporate specific grammar rules so that they can change their habit of learning grammar rules into responding well to use language and communicate according to their present level of competence. For them grammar learning is not forbidden rather grammar is accomplished with communicative functions and presented in a communicative approach.
- Teachers at the beginning need to be tolerant to the learners' grammatical errors and let them communicate with the language and later in more advanced level when they are used to communicate with the language quite comfortably, then their accuracy has to be checked.
- According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), there are three basic types of material in this communicative approach (p. 168). These are text-based materials, task-based materials and realia. So, Grammar teaching materials need to be modified.
- Grammar teaching materials can be text-based in a way that learners are given the forms and functions to practice in pairs and groups and also they can solve various grammatical exercises by engaging themselves to perform the rules.
- Grammar tests should not only be written tests. Teachers need to test their grammatical competence orally and thereby make the competence into oral performance.
- Teachers can use different grammar items, vocabulary and phrases to apply them in their writing such as personal letter, essay, paragraph, report, dialogue writing etc.
- Teachers can use realia to teach grammar in this communicative approach. For example: they can use newspaper articles and give instructions to the students to find out particular grammar items.
- Teachers can make grammar learning a fun for the learners by using various grammar games. For example: teachers can teach conditional sentences by making them a fun game. Teachers can present them with example like Had I been a king, I would have helped the poor. Then he can ask the students to discuss in pairs or groups what they would have done if they were kings. Then he can ask from each pair or group to listen from the learners. This is just one example. Teachers can apply many techniques to make grammar teaching a fun game and communicative.
- Particular grading or sequencing for communicative grammar teaching is not necessary at all. But if teachers want they can divide the communicative functions and arrange them in a way so that the sequencing is not hampered. In communicative grammar modal verbs should, would, could may come naturally before shall, will, can. It is not prohibited.
- The teachers need to match grammatical forms with particular communicative functions and the learners have to choose the right form to express ideas and feelings about a particular topic and in a particular situation. This will enable them to use grammar practically to express themselves in different contexts, to communicate meaningfully with others and thus to see the connection between form and function.
- According to the demand of the revolution in choosing materials of communicative English grammar for Bangladeshi learners in CLT classroom, teachers need to be talented, innovative and well trained. Teachers should not be biased with a particular textbook or material rather he needs to modify materials according to the demand, learning styles and preferences of the learners and to enhance communicative performance.

7. Conclusion

The communicative approach itself is a revolution in the modern trend of English language teaching. This revolution has brought about a significant change in the approach of grammar teaching. CLT does not exclude grammar rather it shows grammar a revolutionary way. Communicative grammar teaching has been battling with the traditional explicit grammar teaching and has been struggling to establish its own place in the realm of CLT. So this new concept of communicative grammar needs some time to settle and reform its materials to suit in the realm of CLT. The main problem lies in the question that how communicative grammar can be. Grammar can be Communicative with the help of proper needs analysis, proper selection and use of authentic grammar teaching materials, the inclusion of function, meaning and communication in the study of grammar and well trained teachers. Thus, communicative grammar can bring about a revolutionary change in the realm of CLT.

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Appendix

Appendix A: List of Institutes and Number of teachers interviewed .

<i>Name of the Institute</i>	<i>Number of Teachers Interviewed</i>
National Ideal English Version School	01
Cosmo School and College	04
Uttara University	01
Dhaka International University	01
East West University	01
The Millennium University	02
Total=	10

Appendix B: Teachers'/Faculty Members' Perception and Belief Questionnaire.

Dear English Teachers/Faculty Members,

Please respond to the following queries neutrally. Your response will be used for research purpose. If your response is 'Yes', then put a tick mark in the designed boxes according to the parameter and if your response is 'No' keep the box blank. In case of interview through mobile phone your 'Yes' response will be considered as a tick mark in the designed box and your 'No' response will be considered as an empty box.

<i>Queries</i>	<i>Teacher 1</i>	<i>Teacher 2</i>	<i>Teacher 3</i>	<i>Teacher 4</i>	<i>Teacher 5</i>	<i>Teacher 6</i>	<i>Teacher 7</i>	<i>Teacher 8</i>	<i>Teacher 9</i>	<i>Teacher10</i>
Do you teach grammar rules deductively?										
Do you teach grammar rules inductively?										
Do you have any training in communicative grammar teaching?										
Do your students love to learn grammar rules?										
Do you present grammar rules through communicative functions to your students?										
Do your students find it difficult to induce grammar rules from communicative functions?										

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